

# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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*The future of a community's infrastructure has come to mean more than merely providing traditional public utility services, such as streets, water and sanitary sewer. Critical to tomorrow's infrastructure is managing the rapid growth in information technology services.*

*Fiber optics, cable, wireless, and other related technologies are becoming a vital part of a community's infrastructure. Supporting the explosion in the delivery of information technology is becoming part of a community's basic planning requirements.*

*This section examines the current status of information technology in the city and county, including the Mayor's Technology Council, city government information technology programs, community based information technology activities, and wireless telecommunication services.*

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## MAYOR'S TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

Lincoln's Mayor has established a community board – entitled the Mayor's Technology Council – to further the use of information technology in the growth and development of the City.

A major element of the Council's work is a "Community-Wide Technology Infrastructure Audit." The audit's purpose is to study Lincoln's (including the City's three mile planning area) technological environment and in so doing address its current and potential competitiveness. This includes the information technology infrastructure's ability to maintain and draw businesses and residents. This will be done by evaluating inadequacies in the current system and then defining what is needed to maximize the City's potential. This audit is underway but is not anticipated to be completed until the spring of 2002.

*"To lead the City of Lincoln and bring together the public, private, and education sectors to enhance the community's core technology strengths and infrastructure to achieve a competitive advantage for Lincoln as a leading city for technology based businesses and to promote economic development." --  
Mayor's Technology Council  
Mission Statement*

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES

The City of Lincoln and Lancaster County promote the integration of information technology throughout the community by their use of technologies in the business of local government. Examples of such activities include:

**Project InterLinc.** This program provides public access to the Internet for all urban and rural communities of the Lancaster County. Through a public-private partnership, the City and County received Federal grant funds to install Internet-enabled terminals throughout the area. High speed lines and free access terminals have been placed in libraries, community centers, recreation centers, and senior centers. Project InterLinc offers expanded opportunities to access government in the areas of employment, health and human services, planning and development, and general information assistance. Rural areas of the county, for example, can perform numerous governmental transactions over the Internet, such as issuing permits, collecting fees, and completing forms. This saves travel time and resources for both citizens and government employees. The program places special emphasis on reducing the disparity of Internet access among low income and minorities by deployment of 66 percent of the computers in these communities.

**Wireless InterLinc.** This project supports wireless Internet access to city and county field staff to assist them in delivering government services. Using personal digital assistant (PDA) wireless devices, city and county personnel can obtain information directly from the Internet (including Intranet access). Recent examples include the ability to search property records by name or address. This is supported by a mapping service that provides a street map based on the address or street name entered by the user. The street map can be viewed in the field by the user on a small, hand held device.

**County-City Building.** The recently opened County-City Building uses a variety of new technologies to increase citizen access to government. An array of video equipment is used to broadcast local government meetings over a local cable channel as well as via the Internet.

**Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Technology.** A family of city and county departments have created an extensive system of digital geographic information. A set of digital base maps for the entire county has been built for the legal and cadastral (ownership) parcels. These maps were created using Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology. The maps serve as the foundation for hundreds of other geographic databases, including natural resources, topographic features, land use, structures, floodplains, jurisdictional boundaries, and infrastructure. A broad assortment of digital imagery — i.e., photographs — is also included in this GIS information base.

**E-Government.** The City continues to expand the options local residents have to use the Internet to do business with local government. The Lincoln Water System, for example, allows households to not only pay their water bills over the Internet, but also to view information about their water usage. It is anticipated that this additional information will allow home owners to better manage their water usage, thus conserving water and saving money on their water bills.

**Intelligent Transportation Systems.** Information technology offers many opportunities for making better use of transportation facilities and services. “Intelligent Transportation Systems” is the idea of using computers and digital technology to get the most out of the community’s investment in roads and other transportation facilities. This approach is described further in the Future-Mobility and Transportation section of the Plan.

## C COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Information technology applications continue to expand and adapt within an ever evolving situation. Higher speed transmission links providing greater levels of reliability offer the foundation for numerous uses – both envisioned and as yet unimagined.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is helping to pioneer information technology as a community resource and economic development instrument. Through a variety of academic programs and enterprise initiatives, the University is furthering information technology locally as well as world-wide.

An example is the UNL's Great Plains Software Technology Initiative. This effort is designed to advance software research, education, and technology outreach to areas in risk of being left behind as basic changes occur in the way people work and live. While this program has wide implications, Lincoln and Lancaster County will benefit from the talent, resources, and applications that are part of this Initiative.

The University is also working on programs involving computer science and engineering, specifically in the areas of computer simulation and modeling, bioinformation, and business applications. While much of the research is on new and innovative ideas, Lincoln can serve as a testing ground for the use of the products and services coming out of these programs.

## **T**ELECOMMUNICATION FACILITIES

The telecommunication industry has experienced rapid growth in recent years. Much of this growth has been in the cellular and wireless services sector. These services include cellular telephones, personal communication services (PCS), specialized mobile radios, and paging.

Commonly known as "wireless communications," PCS technology is capable of sending and receiving voice, data, text, and video messages. The development of the infrastructure to support the various technologies presents the community with new land use challenges — especially the siting and visual impact of antennas and supporting equipment.

The full range of cellular and wireless services are available in the city and county. These services are provided by multiple carriers. These carriers are in various stages of development.

### ***Multi-Lingual Website for Refugees***

*On a per capita basis, Lincoln is the 14<sup>th</sup> largest resettlement site in the country. During the last decade large numbers of refugees have arrived from Vietnam, Iraq, Bosnia, and the former USSR. Few of these refugees speak English. To assist them in making the transition to this county, the Lincoln Action Program is developing a multi-lingual website that allows non- or limited-English speaking users to view essential information in their own language. The program specifically targets Vietnamese, Arabic, Bosnian, former USSR, and Hispanic populations. The website will help these newcomers to the Lincoln community find jobs, housing, medical assistance, and other vital services.*

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